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CENTER SCENE

Social Scientists and BLM Decisionmakers: *Bridging the Gap*

For many years, economists and other social scientists in BLM have attempted to provide useful information to BLM managers. For a number of reasons, though, BLM social scientists have sometimes felt unappreciated, while the BLM decisionmakers they serve have felt let down.

This problem has grown out of a lack of understanding and communication between the two groups of BLM professionals. Jeff Zabler, an economist who recently transferred to the Service Center from the Washington Office, is aware of the problem and hopes to play a role in solving it.

Zabler brings a wealth of experience to his new responsibilities here at the SC. He was an economics professor in a small New England college in the mid-1970s when he was hired by the Bureau as an economist to work on social and economic impacts for the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) Office in Washington. He soon went from being an employee in the OCS Branch of Economic Analysis to being the Branch Chief.

Zabler went to work in the Secretary's Office on oil shale and other issues before returning to the Bureau to become Chief of the Division of Fluid Minerals. Following this assignment, he was sent to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (part of the National War College). Zabler found this year of training valuable because of the practical no-nonsense military approach to training managers. "This training was one of the best experiences I've ever had in my life, bar none!" observes Zabler.

Upon his return, Zabler became a special assistant to the Associate Director and worked on straightening out some of the problems with the Trans-Alaska pipeline. His final assignment in Washington was to serve as head of the National Performance Review office. Then, after almost 20 years, Zabler got the opportunity he had always wanted—the opportunity to move out into the field.

Zabler's main job here at the SC, as he sees it, is more to make economics an effective tool for management in BLM than to conduct economic analyses. Bridging the gap between the social sciences and management is especially critical in light of four factors:

- The change to ecosystem management, with its emphasis on the human component as part of the overall picture.
- The emphasis by the White House on customer service.
- The more vocal role being taken by constituencies regarding publicly owned resources.
- New leadership in BLM at all levels that is far more open to the value of and need for social science input.

Zabler notes that we really do need to consider people and not just the natural environment. And these people, who are a key part of every ecosystem, vote and are the chief beneficiaries of BLM policies. "It's time we got people back into the equation in a big way!" says Zabler.

To get social scientists and BLM managers working together more effectively, Zabler wants to help managers become more aware of the need to collaborate with social scientists to be successful in addressing human needs. And social scientists need to think like BLM managers and understand their mission and mandates, including ecosystem management. "Social scientists need to take on the burden of understanding situations from the decisionmaker's point of view," he says. "They need to appreciate all aspects of the manager's situation."

Zabler would like to see a situation in which BLM social scientists work hand-in-hand with decisionmakers in identifying needs. Social scientists would translate these needs into economic or other social science terms, tap into a network of experts both within and outside the Bureau, and coach the researchers to obtain a fitting detailed analysis. Finally, the BLM scien-

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Separations:

Ronald Bailey, SC-651, Contract Price Cost Analyst

Maria Hill, SC-616, Mail & File Clerk

Judy Miller, SC-616, Financial Systems Analyst

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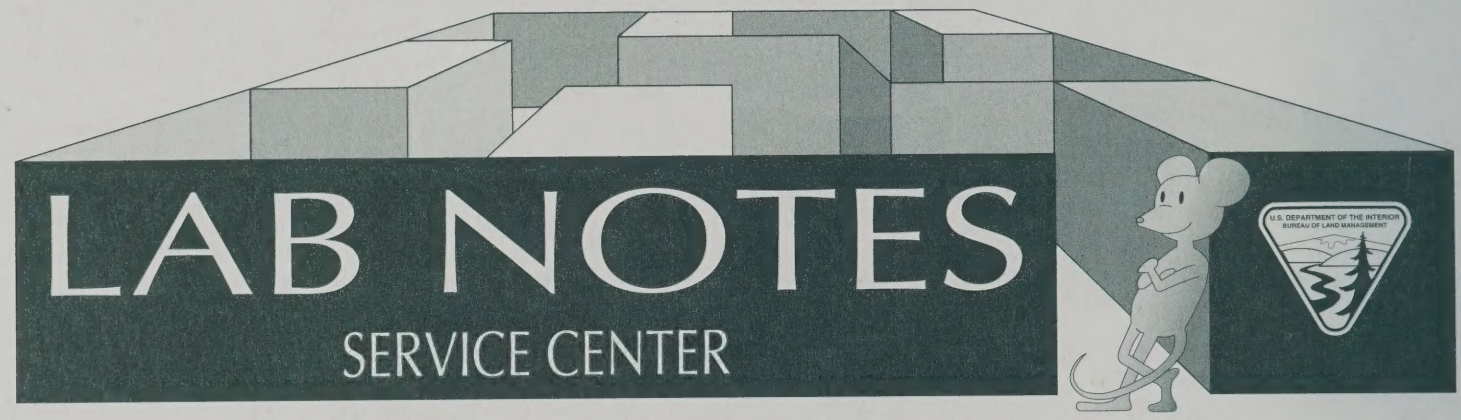
tist would translate this analysis back into language that is meaningful to the decisionmaker and clearly applicable to the original issue. "Otherwise," observes Zabler, "you have two groups of professionals who don't understand each other and are not able to help each other out."

Zabler is optimistic about achieving success in his quest. He maintains, "We have the expertise—social scientists who want to contribute—and decisionmakers who need the help. Whenever you have a match between unmet needs and unused resources, you've got a solvable problem."

Zabler and his wife Maureen, who is a Special Agent with the FBI, have already settled into a house in the southwest metro area that has a beautiful view of the mountains. Both enjoy skiing, hiking, birdwatching, golf ("we're both really terrible, but we have fun trying"), and fishing. Zabler also is a self-professed "train nut." "I love trains, and Colorado is narrow-gauge heaven," explains Zabler. "I think we'll really enjoy it here!"



"A National Performance Review Laboratory"

Internal Communications Concerns Addressed

The Service Center Management Team (SCMT) has agreed to take actions to improve internal communications in response to a recent report by the Internal Communications Team (ICT). The report contained a summary of concerns expressed by employees during open discussions with the ICT.

One frequently mentioned concern was that not all employees are connected to the LAN. Full connectivity is currently in process, so this concern was not addressed by the SCMT. Other concerns and recommendations from the report include:

- *Inefficient mail procedures.* Recommendation: Develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for communicating information about reorganizations, reassignments, transfers, and name changes to ensure correct and timely delivery of mail. SOPs should also be developed for updating this information on the LAN.

- *Unanswered phones.* Recommendation: Analyze each workgroup's telephone configuration. Many areas have been regrouped on short notice and "thrown" together due to lack of time and resources. Retool the telephone configurations of small workgroups and then each Center's overall configuration to improve the telephone system.

- *Lack of communication from management to employees.* Recommendation: SC Directors and Division Chiefs should hold monthly meetings and minutes should be distributed to all employees.

- *Employees' lack of knowledge about the organization.* Recommendation: Combine the old "New Employee Orientation" and the "Employee Excellence" sessions into a 2-day, on-site workshop. The workshop would communicate the mission and capabilities of all SC branches.

- *Frequency, duration, and location of all-employee meetings.* Recommendation: Hold shorter meetings more often for the entire group of employees. Investigate the possibility of renting space or building a facility on the Denver Federal Center for all agencies as BLM is one of several agencies having difficulty finding a meeting place for large groups.

The SCMT concurred with all recommendations with one exception—building a new meeting facility is not feasible given current budget constraints. One recommendation has already been implemented—SCMT meetings are once again being held weekly, and minutes are distributed via the LAN. The other recommendations are currently being implemented, and as a result of their input, employees should begin to see improvements to internal communications.

ON THE HEP SIDE

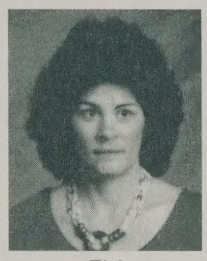
Co-op Students Receive Degrees

Theresa Fresquez

Theresa Fresquez's last day of college classes was February 6, making her a candidate to receive her bachelor of science degree from Colorado Christian University. Theresa observed, "It's taken me 5 long years and a lot of hard work to finish college, but I feel it will be worth it." Theresa has been converted from a co-op student to a permanent position with the IRM/Modernization's Wildlife and Fisheries Information System (WFIS) Project, where she's been working as a computer assistant.

Theresa has been involved with a wide range of initiatives to implement new programs for advancing Hispanics and women in the workforce and has received several appreciation awards for this involvement. Theresa served as an assistant to the Hispanic Employment Program Manager (HEPM) in 1993 and 1994. She is an active member of National Image, Inc., and was the Denver chapter's recording secretary.

Theresa says, "One of the principles I've applied to my life is to always reach for the stars."



Elsie Pacheco

Elsie Pacheco received an associates degree and certificates in word processing and microcomputer applications from Metropolitan State College on December 30, 1994.

Elsie spent the first 5 years of Federal service with HUD-CEDA as a full-time employee. She then spent 2 years at BOR as a Stay-In-School and 2 years with BLM as a co-op student. Elsie has been converted to a permanent position. She currently works as a Staff Assistant in the Division of Applied Resource Science's Soil, Water, and Air Section (SC-212).

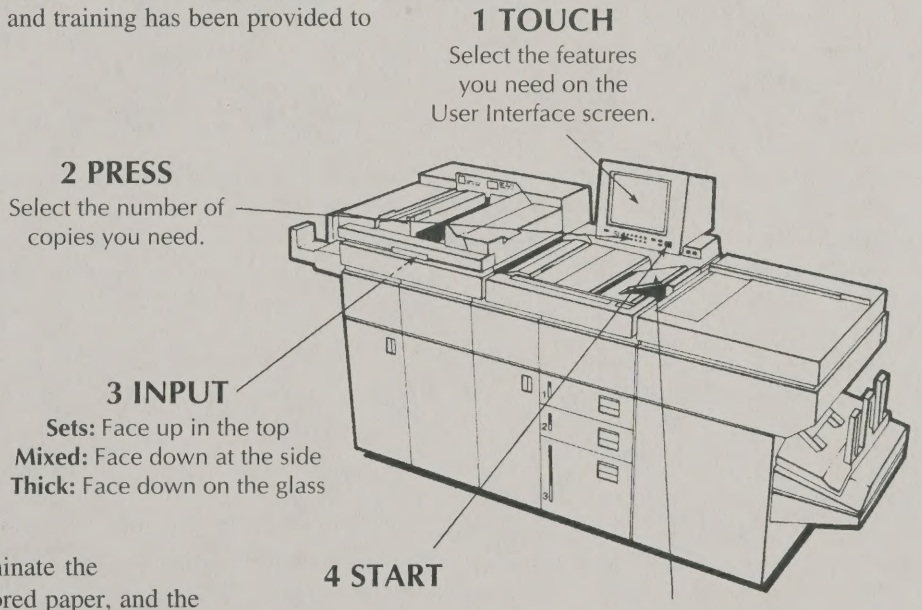
Elsie's educational goal now is to get a bachelor's degree in administration. She says, "I'm doing this for myself and for my two children."

SC Installs Self-Service Copiers

The Reproduction Room in Building 50 has been converted to a self-service facility. Two new Xerox 5100 copiers have been installed and training has been provided to several groups of SC employees.

Each machine has a touch screen which contains user-friendly operating instructions. The menu on the screen lists the machine's features, and you make your selections simply by pointing to them on the screen. The screen also displays step-by-step instructions and helpful diagrams when there is a problem with the machine.

The basic features of the new machines are similar to those of the satellite copiers, including two-sided copying, collation, and reduction and enlargement (from 65-155 percent). However, the new machines are faster—they can make 100 one-sided copies or 60 two-sided copies per minute—and have many special features. For example, the photo suppression feature will eliminate the dark shading that occurs when copying from colored paper, and the image shifting feature will move the copy to the left or right to allow room for a three-hole drill, for example. Additionally, the new machines allow you to use transparencies and cover stock, to staple, and to feed computer forms without having to tear them apart.


1 TOUCH
Select the features you need on the User Interface screen.
2 PRESS
Select the number of copies you need.
3 INPUT
Sets: Face up in the top
Mixed: Face down at the side
Thick: Face down on the glass
4 START
5 REMOVE
Copies: Top Tray
Side Output Tray
Originals: Top Document Feeder
Document Output Tray
Document Glass

Although the new copiers are available to everyone, employees are still requested to use the smaller satellite copiers throughout the building for small or simple copying jobs. For copy jobs that need to be contracted to the Government Printing Office (GPO), contact Sherri Hendren at 236-6458 or Carl Anderson at 236-6364. If you have questions about the copiers, contact Vickie Smejkal at 236-6367.

A Typical Day on a Helitack Crew

By Susan Goodman

Fort Collins, Colorado, August 1994

Editor's Note: *This is the second in a series of articles about the experiences of SC/DW employees who helped fight fires this past summer.*

Photos from the Blackwell fire, Payette National Forest, McCall, Idaho

Ah, another beautiful morning as the helicopter crew rises with the sun. Breakfast is the first order of the day. One aspect of firefighting is that you never know when your next meal will be so you eat when you can.

After breakfast, we gather our gear and head off to the Fort Collins Airport where Helicopter 27-Mike has spent the night. The helicopter manager starts the diary of the day's events. Our call-when-needed (CWN) helicopter crew includes the pilot, mechanic/fuel truck driver, and four crew people. I do the load calculation. (I've escaped from the office and I still have to use my brain!) The calculation is for our first flight of the day, which is out to Poudre Canyon northwest of Fort Collins where we supported five fires the previous day.

Our first assignment is to fly a Native American, 20-person handcrew into two of the fires that are still burning. Prior to flying the crew in, we're required to give them a safety briefing. All of their tools are then taped together and their other gear is checked for loose objects that could fly up into the rotor of the helicopter and cause damage. Transportation of this crew takes about an hour and a half. By now, temperatures are edging close to 100°F.

After ferrying the crew, Northern Dispatch in Fort Collins calls to say we have another fire assignment in Wyoming on the Medicine Bow National Forest. Another load calculation is done to see how much fuel we can take with us. We estimate from the new fire's latitude and longitude that it is approximately 100 miles from our current location in Poudre Canyon. We reload 27-Mike. Our gear goes in the left cargo basket. The Bambi bucket and the longline with the remote hook go in the right cargo basket. The Bambi bucket is the bucket that carries the water to drop on the fire. The longline with the remote hook is used to drop in cargo, such as food, without having to land the helicopter.

The 97-mile flight into Wyoming is fantastic. We cross terrain that few people have ever seen. Every valley where there is a stream is farmed.

It takes a little over an hour to arrive at the Bull Ridge Fire. The fire is 60 miles from the nearest paved road. The pilot attacks the fire with water drops from the Bambi bucket while we mop up the hotspots. The locals are very happy that we're here as this area is considered prime grazing and elk habitat.

Our fuel truck doesn't arrive until 1600 (4 p.m.) since the drive is a good four hours and the roads to the fire are not well marked. The helicopter finishes making its 100 bucket drops around 2030 (8:30 p.m.) and is parked for the night in a corral. Why park the helicopter in a corral? Because, animals, both wild and domestic, are curious and will rub up against the helicopter and damage it.

That night we drive to Douglas, Wyoming, to spend the night. We arrive around 2200 (10 p.m.). Breakfast seems like days ago. And you thought firefighting was easy!

The following is a list of the SC/DW employees who helped with fires this past season:

Richard Banks	William Moody
Dennis Clonts	Louise Precosky
Da-Verne Evans	Nancy Pullam
Susan Goodman	Tom Sadowski
Bob Gordon	Chris Smith
Paul Graves	Tom Spencer
Terri Jeffries	Pat Swift
Vida Jenkins	Bill Twenhofel
Russ Jackson	Melinda Walker
Connie Miller	Tim Woods
Karen Miranda	Donna Zinn

Susan Goodman is the SC Fire Management Specialist.